

A Bleak House: Preparing Ph.Ds for the Challenges of the Contemporary Job Market



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Presentation Overview

- ✓ Facts and Figures (USA and Canada)
- ✓ Scenario
- ✓ Two Options
- ✓ Further Reading
- ✓ Conclusion

FIRST RULE OF THE PHD JOB MARKET

**YOU DO NOT ASK ABOUT THE PHD JOB
MARKET**

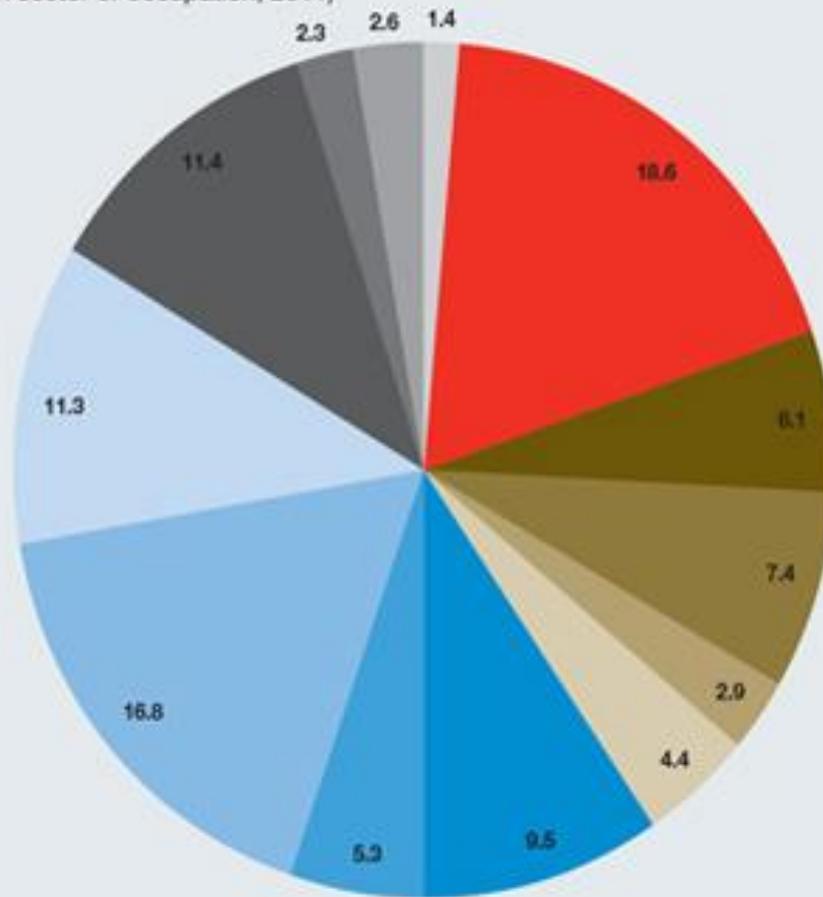
Facts and Figures (USA)

- In the United States, 75% of the professoriate is composed of adjuncts
- Forty years ago, 75% of the professoriate was composed of tenure stream faculty
- Salary: tenure stream faculty \$102,000
- Salary: adjunct \$23,000 (\$9.00/hour)
- Debt Average: \$25,000 (USD)

Facts and Figures (Canada)

Where are Canada's PhDs employed?

(percentage in sector or occupation, 2011)



18.6%

■ Full-time university professor

20.8%

- Part-time university professor
- PSE research and teaching assistant
- Full- or part-time college instructor
- Postdoctoral scholars

60.6%

- Management occupations
- Business, finance and administration
- Natural and applied sciences
- Health
- Education, law, social, community, government services (not PSE)
- Art, culture, recreation, sport
- Sales and service
- Trades, transport, equipment operators; manufacturing/utilities

Scenario

Andrew has successfully defended his doctoral dissertation. He stops into your office and asks, "Hey Professor [insert name here]! I'm going to start applying for tenure-track positions and I was just wondering if you can give me some advice."

What advice do you give Andrew?

Activity Time: 3 Minutes

YOU COMPLETED A PHD?



**YOU GET A TENURE TRACK
JOB.**

The Problem

- The main problem is there are too many PhDs for a few tenure-track positions
- Also, universities continue to accept more and more graduate students
- Another problem is that the PhD trains students for a very specific job
- If there are only a few tenure-track positions left and the PhD program does not train students for anything else, what are they supposed to do?

Two Options

- **Option 1: Tenure-Track** - Try to obtain a tenure track job by publishing quality works, adjunct teaching, and obtaining grants
- **Option 2: Alt-Academic** - Seek out non-academic jobs that may be of interest

Option 1: The Facts

- New PhDs will not have the same job as their advisors and will spend their time searching for a job that does not exist
- Today, by the time they hit the job market, new PhDs should have a book manuscript in mind, several published sole peer-reviewed articles, grants, and university teaching experience

Option 1: The Problem

- The problem is that by the time PhDs receive all this information it is too late
- Most do not have the time to publish books and articles in addition to the dissertation
- Also, most graduate programs do not teach their PhDs how to write job documents so when they apply, their applications are disastrous

Option 1: The Reality

- The harsh reality is that the goal post of “what will get you a tenure-track job” is constantly being moved farther away
- There is a “inflation of credentials” to the point that it is never enough
- Those who are adamant about a tenure-track position must be relentless and industrious (thick-skinned too!)

Option 2: The Facts

- The literature on graduate education and academia employment issues is increasingly focusing on “post-ac” or “alt-ac” jobs
- In other words, jobs that are not on the tenure-track but at a university or jobs that are completely outside of the university (NGOs, government, academic presses, industry)

Option 2: The Problem

- The problem is that the PhD programs/ advisors seem to train their students for one type of work: the professoriate
- Others opportunities are rarely discussed and skills for jobs outside of the professoriate are rarely cultivated
- Those who are unable to secure tenure-track positions are deemed failures. Those who move on to something outside of academia are "traitors"

Option 2: The Reality

- Ask new PhDs what they would do if they could not find a tenure-track job?
- It is likely that many PhDs have never been asked that 'odd' question before
- They need to realize that there is a very large world outside of academia
- PhDs still have many transferable skills that would be of value in the 'real' world

The Plans

THE PLANS:



THE PLAN YOU
TELL YOUR
ADVISOR

- "I'M GOING TO BE A
PROFESSOR AT A MAJOR
RESEARCH UNIVERSITY
AFTER I GRADUATE."



THE REAL
PLAN

- LOOK FOR CAREER
ALTERNATIVES.



THE SECRET
PLAN

- BECOME A
BAKER/ROCKSTAR/WRITER.

Further Reading

Basalla, Susan and Maggie Debelius. *So What Are You Going to Do with That?": Finding Careers Outside Academia*. 3rd ed. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2014.

Cassuto, Leonard. *The Graduate School Mess: What Caused It and How We Can Fix It*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2015.

Edge, Jessica and Daniel Munro. *Valuing and Preparing PhDs for Careers*. Ottawa: The Conference Board of Canada, 2015.

Kelsky, Karen. *The Professor Is In: The Essential Guide To Turning Your Ph.D. Into a Job*. New York: Three Rivers P, 2015.

Thank You

I would like to thank you all for attending this session. I am more than happy to answer any questions you may have about this presentation.

Sincerely,
John Cappucci, Ph.D.
University of Windsor